Ground control to Major Pond

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

If you've been feeling a tad guilty ever since kicking Dr Maybe into touch at the North Pole just so some bloated guy in a fluffy red suit could go joyriding with his pet reindeer, you'll be mightily relieved to hear he survived the ordeal largely unscathed, made a spectacular recovery and went on to have another pop at world domination. This was way back in 1993, where've you been?

DEFEATED BY JAMES POND, DR MAYBE LEAVES THE NORTH POLE... INTENT UPON REVENGE...

Embodying 'double bubble seven', James Pond, you too make a comeback for the eagerly-awaited sequel to RoboCod. With coder, artist and game designer, Chris Sorrell, once again at the helm, work began on 'Splash Gordon' in November 1992 with a view to an Easter 1993 ETA.

As the project's scope and ambition spiralled, the release date justifiably slipped. In the meantime, Gordon was rechristened 'Jordan' and a port from the Mega Drive lead system to the Amiga - unbeknown to Chris and co. - became a race against Commodore's financial collapse. 'Operation Starfish/Starfi5h' as it ultimately came to be known was released for the Genesis in October 1993, while ports for the Amiga 1200, CD32, Game Gear, and SNES finally followed in June 1994. A proposed SEGA Master System version was canned, likely for economic reasons. Also on the cards at the blueprint stage was a diluted (and doomed) Amiga ECS release; as Pond's latest foray into global freedom crusading expanded beyond the capabilities of the ageing system, it was felt the Amiga 500/600 would be unable to do justice to the successor of one of the system's most fondly

remembered titles. 2mb system RAM is a basic requirement for running the three disk sequel to the sequel, aside from any demands placed on the processor.

If you can recall Robocod's death-defying, gravity-assisted and largely uncontrollable sprints down steep slopes, his tail vanishing into a hazy blur of erratic motion, and can imagine a dizzying platformer where this means of travel is the norm, that's Operation Starfish in a clam-shell.

"He's at least as fast as Sonic" - **Chris Sorrell, Amiga Power preview (January 1993)**

With dreams of knocking Sonic from his lofty pedestal, Millennium and publishers Electronic Arts set out to leave the blue Spiky one in Pond's (moon) dust. Like SEGA's mascot, the playground of Millennium's speed freak is laden with loops, ramps and collectables galore, ripe for a runaway guppy to tear up without so much as a cursory glance at the brake pedal.

You *can* explore the ridiculously expansive 100-ish levels at a more leisurely jogging pace (*without* toggling run mode with the space bar, or using a two-button joystick), except JP3 isn't designed to be throttled. Take it easy and you'll be incapable of building up sufficient momentum to scale the steeper mountains, some of which spike into the air at 90-degree angles!
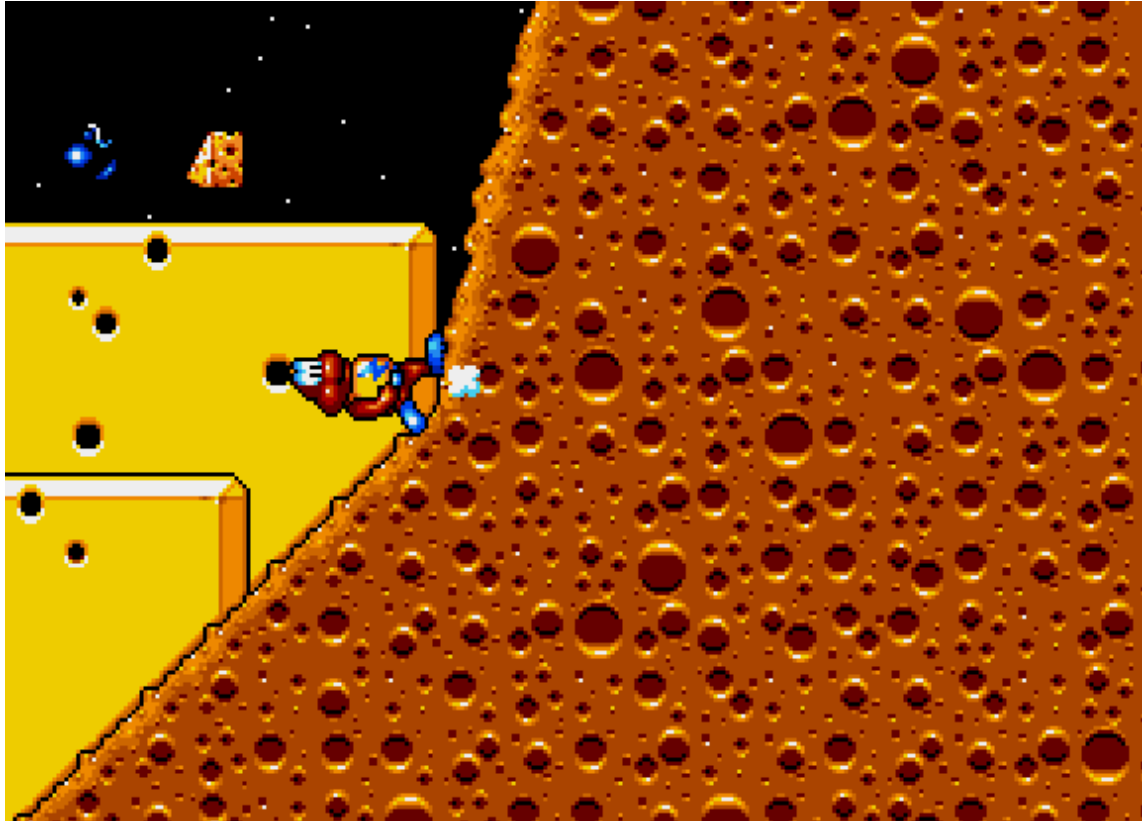
Overzealous inertia is the main problem this poses; Pond moves so fast it's all too easy to overshoot many of the tiny platforms, leaving you floundering like a slippery fish out of water just trying to master the basics. Moreover, playing by the book can be counter-intuitive in that you're encouraged to stamp the peddle to the metal, and then immediately punished for doing so by an unseen and unavoidable collision. There's no real middle ground, unfortunately.

As alluded to, Pond's latest adventure is out of this world... in that it's set on the *moon*! Although hardly the drab, lifeless one we earthlings have grown accustomed to gazing up at as the sun goes to bo-boes for the evening. There are custard lakes, cheddar chasms, Parmesan plains, and dessert deserts. I'm sure you can spot a trend emerging.

"My graphics inspiration comes from Disney cartoons and Tom and Jerry cartoons. It's less apparent in RoboCod, but

much more obvious in this one. Each Pond game has been inspired by a classic Commodore 64 game. Pond was Gribbly's Day Out - I like that a lot - and RoboCod was Thing On A Spring. Pond 3 is similar to Nodes of Yesod.
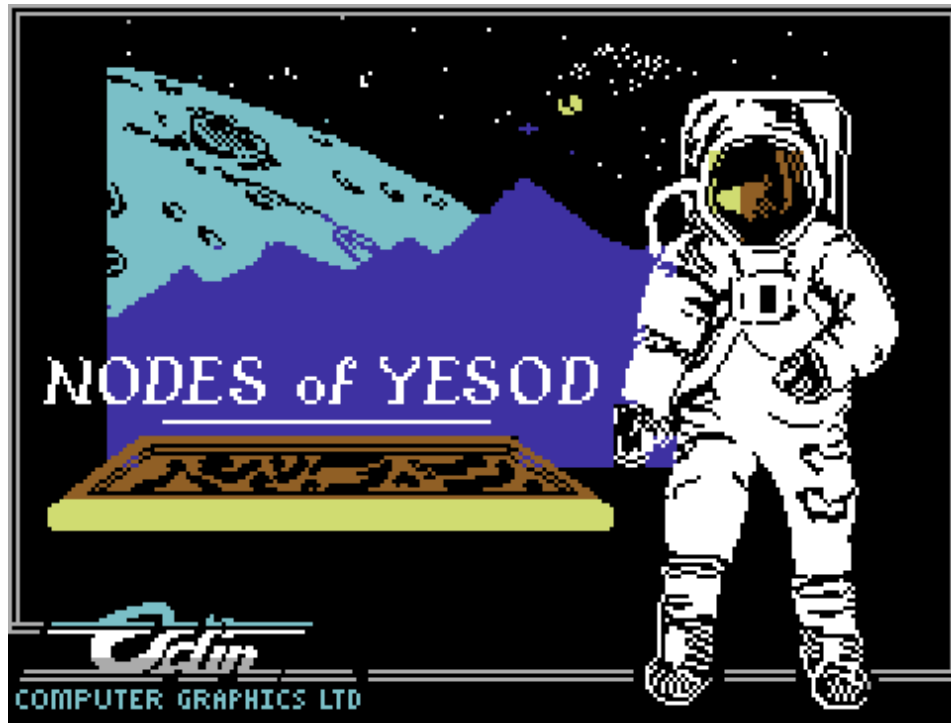
The graphics style of Operation Starfish is a cross between the simple, outlined look of, say, Mario, and Disney cartoons for the animation. Everything blinks to give it more character. There are a lot more animation frames for Pond."

Chris Sorrell, Amiga Power preview (January 1993)

Pond's current star-gazing dilemma is elucidated in great depth within the accompanying FI5H Dossier so I won't steal its thunder. If it strikes you as a bit excessive you have to remember that the backstory was the basis for a comic strip that featured in Look-In magazine beginning in December

1992, and even a prospective novel and animated cartoon to be broadcast on TV. Over to you Chief F...

"Congratulations on your record-breaking results in the Aquatic Games, but now it is time to put your gold medals away. Dr Maybe has returned to threaten world safety!

Following his defeat at your fins in RoboCod, Dr Maybe adopted a low profile. Our special surveillance teams trailed his movements (see report from a FI5H Agent below), but their sightings shed little light on any plans. We hoped that Dr Maybe and the criminal cronies at J.A.W.S. were all washed up, but this has proved to be far from the truth. Once again Maybe is threatening the planet.

Fish Surveillance - Subject: Dr Maybe

12.9.92 - Reported to F.I.5.H. HQ to receive my assignment - to track down Dr Maybe and keep him under surveillance. I travelled to the toy factory where

Maybe was defeated by James Pond. Picked up Maybe's Arctic escape route but trail soon went cold.

2.11.92 - At last I received some news - a tip-off from an informer. A J.A.W.S. meeting was rumoured to be taking place at an abandoned airport in Death Desert. I took up position and waited.

30.11.92 - Success! After two dusty days on duty I spotted Dr Maybe leaving the meeting. He was heavily disguised, but I'd recognise that ugly mug anywhere. Maybe roared off at an incredible speed. Keeping up proved impossible. As I was radioing in my report, I saw a flash of light curving up into the sky.

Since then, no new sightings have been reported. My agent instincts tell me something is about to happen. Dr Maybe *must* be planning something big if he's gone to all this trouble to evade surveillance.

Our fears were roused by the sudden disappearance of a space shuttle (see newspaper cutting). There is only one criminal genius capable of masterminding such an audacious act - Dr Maybe.

Space shuttle shock by ace reporter Lewis Lean

At 0830 today, NASA confirmed the disappearance of one of their space shuttles. Officials were remaining tight-lipped about the causes of the shuttle's disappearance and about the contents of its cargo hold.

Balderdash

Mr Ponsonby-Smythe, a NASA spokesman, denied that the shuttle was on a top-secret military mission. However, papers in my possession confirm that the shuttle's cargo was a spy satellite.

Has Dr Maybe returned?

It is possible that Dr Maybe has returned? NASA's reassurances remain deeply unconvincing. My undersea sources have revealed that the aquatic agency F.I.5.H. put all operatives on red alert and that their top agent, James Pond, is on the verge of wading into action.

F.I.5.H. we picked up one of Maybe's known associates. Unfortunately, the vermin was no squealer. After the coward was tickled into submission they discovered vital evidence in his coat pocket. See below.


"THE RICHES OF THE MOON SHALL BE MINE! - I MUST FIND SOMEONE STUPID ENOUGH TO DO MY DIRTY WORK..."

Rats required

If you are a human-hating rat, contact J.A.W.S. We have great job opportunities with plenty of cheese benefits. Applicants must be hard working - no mooners - and prepared to travel.

I immediately smelt a rat. The evidence we had gathered pointed to one thing - Maybe had set up a secret base on the moon. But why? I instantly despatched a team of three top agents to the moon. They never arrived! See transcript of their last message.
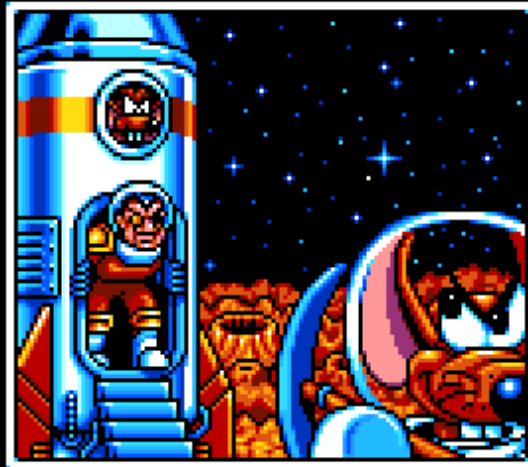
AND SO, DR MAYBE ARRIVES ON THE MOON WITH HIS ARMY OF RODENTS.

F.I.5.H. surveillance - Subject: Dr Maybe

All systems A, OK, we are beginning our orbit of the moon. The dark side is just coming into view and... It's amazing! We can see a giant moon base on the surface... crackle zing. Controls are going haywire, we're caught in garble garble tractor beam. The radio's being jammed buzz crackle we're going...... down......... ahhhhh......... uuuggghhhhhh.........

Further losses could not be risked. I launched 'Claw' space probes and directed spy satellites at the dark side of the moon. The contents of the probes, analysed by Dr Gordon Zola, and the photographs developed by our Codak boffins are truly amazing. Detailed results are shown below. They prove beyond doubt that the moon is

not only made up of cheese, but a whole variety of dairy products.

From our findings we are certain that Dr Maybe has one aim in mind - to mine finest quality Moon Cheese and monopolise the world's cheese markets. The effects of this would be devastating.
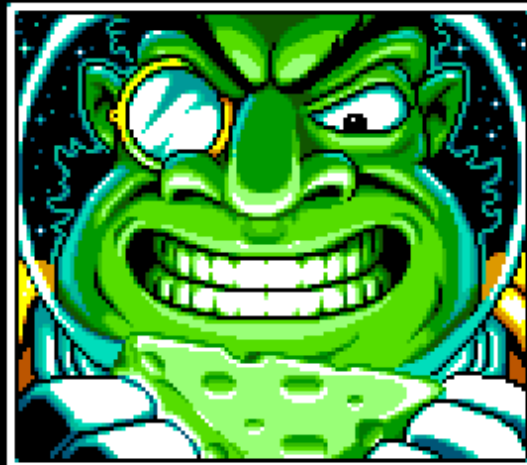
"AT LAST MY MINES ARE OPERATIONAL! WITH THIS HIGH-GRADE PROCESSED CHEESE I WILL CORNER THE GLOBAL MARKETS AND THE EARTH SHALL BE AT MY MERCY."

As our top F.I.5.H. operative, you have been assigned to Operation Starfi5h. Your mission is to rescue fellow agents, destroy Maybe's Cheese mines and defeat Dr Maybe, but beware, it will be no picnic. Unfortunately, three of our other agents are still missing, one of them Finnius Frog, is vital to the success of the mission - rescue Finnius and he'll help you out.

Our scientists have developed new F.I.5.H. equipment for use in the special moon environment. Further details on these subjects as well as detailed moon reports are enclosed in this dossier, along with a short Moon acclimatisation programme. Remember, one fish can make the difference. The world is relying on you."

Would it be redundant to point out this is a Star Wars parody? You're right, I'll let it speak for itself. :|

On that note, while RoboCod had a telescopic body, wings, cars, planes and bathtubs to help him get around, Space Pond has gravity boots that allow him to grip any surface, a range of armoured fruit suits that transform him into a lethal bowling ball, and a handheld jet pack for aerial exploration… as long as you remember to keep the fuel topped up. Umbrellas - as seen in Operation Starfish's predecessor -

make a welcome return, taking the sting out of pear-shaped leaps of faith.
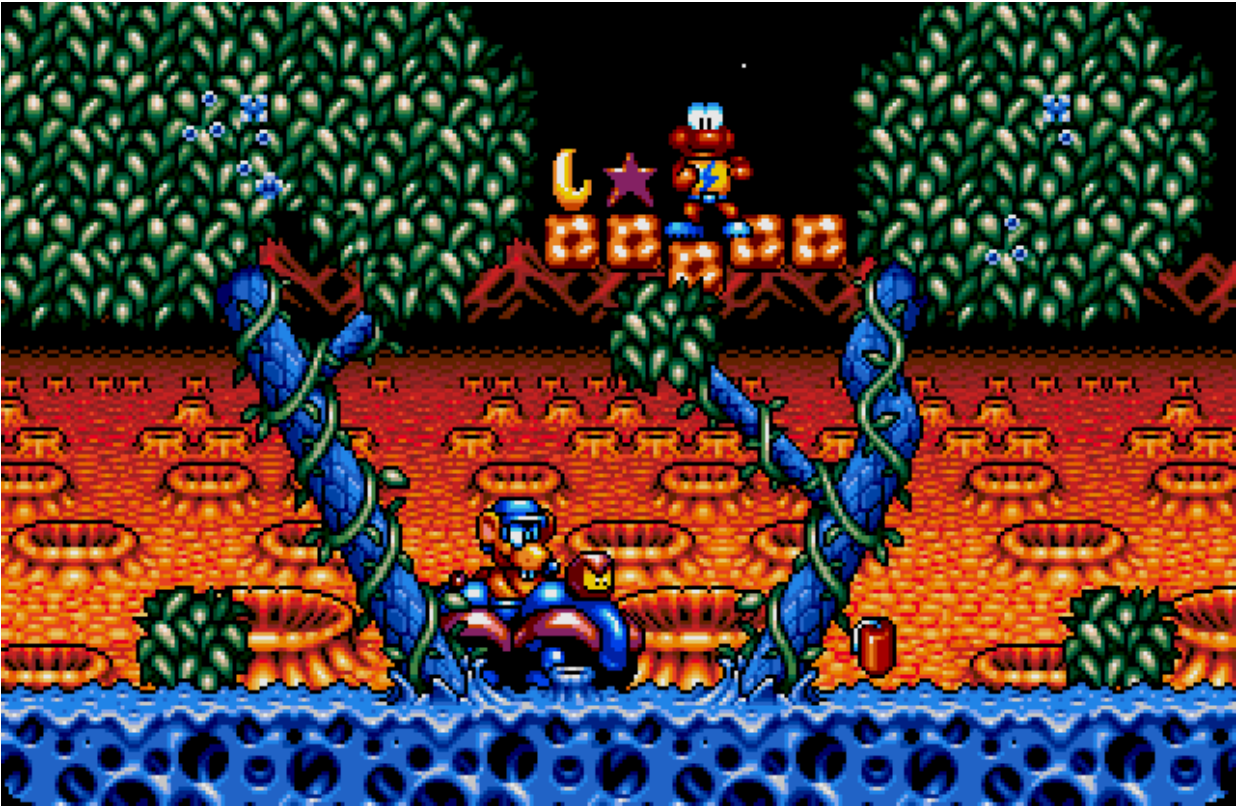
In Operation Starfish the rats are in the driving seat.

"There'll be an almost limitless number of routes through it. You should be able to go back once you've completed them, to find the hidden things. This one's going to have more hidden things than ever before. It'd be difficult for one person to find them all."

Chris Sorrell, Amiga Power preview (January 1993)

More of a novelty is the new Mario style bird's eye view map you use to plot your path between levels on course to the final confrontation with the deranged Doc. Not all of these have to be completed to finish the game - and you can attempt them in a non-linear sequence to keep your attempts fresh from one session to the next - though how

much you accomplish *does* determine which of the three climaxes you get to see when your super-sleuthing skills are assessed. Only by ridding the moon of all Maybe's mines and stiltonium machines can you enjoy the premium ending.

Five guardian levels are available for you to tackle, each ending with a larger than life, inventive boss sprite much like in RoboCod.
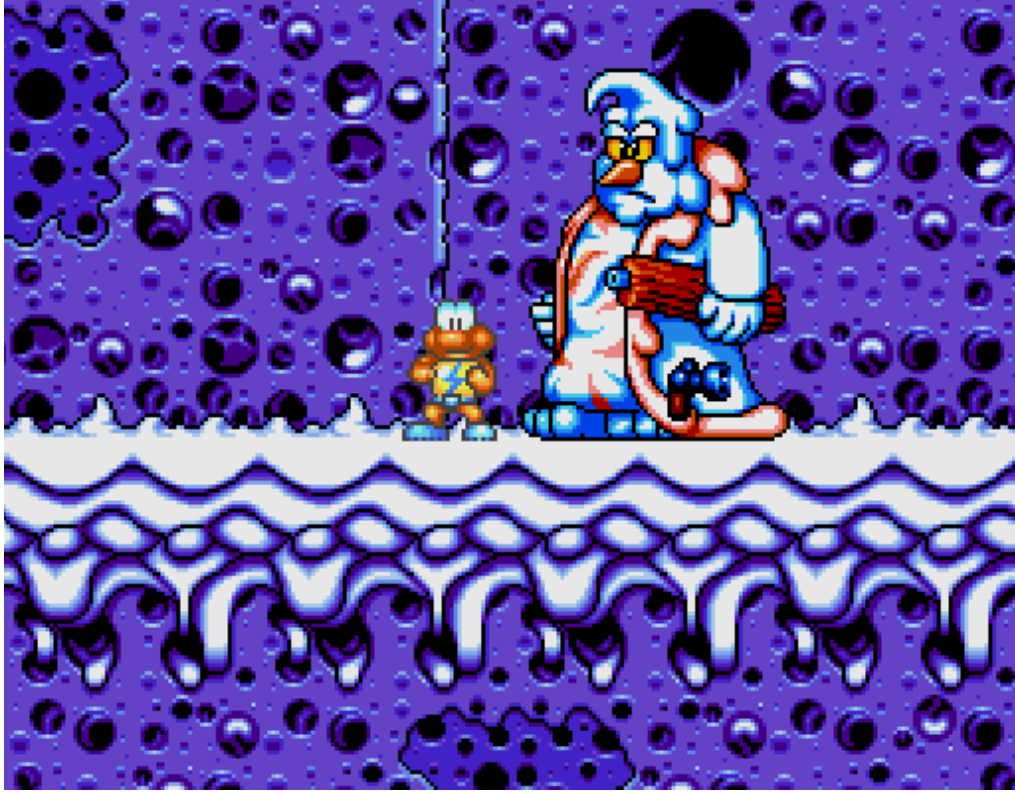
This isn't one of them believe it or not. Suddenly I'm craving a Mr Whippy with a Cadbury's Flake and raspberry ripple sauce.

There's a vaulting, stalk-eyed, sabre-toothed frog known as the 'Lumpsville Lurker' with a tongue consisting of a whip of balls, terminating in a paint-splatter popper. You can consider the colossal beast defeated upon the tenth head-bounce, if you can avoid being lassoed and eaten for long enough.

Kentucky fried fiend is a seemingly placid, jumbo rooster that lays ticking and toddling, cute explosive chicks. Initially fairly harmless he'll peck away at the Putty-like creatures sitting on the bridge covering a bubbling cauldron bath of pink molten dairy. With the blocks removed he falls through into the vat... only to transform into a much more potent, fire-breathing phoenix from the Angel Delight. Hammer him with enough apple-ammo via the gateaux gun and he'll be coming to a baked pie near you, soon.

Also intent on "twistin' your melon, man" is the gargantuan, spinning 'mush-beast'. This curmudgeonly member of the evil flora and fauna society sprouts hands allowing him to pelt mini mushrooms at you. Like Arnie, he'll be back... faster, meaner and tougher to vanquish than before. You could say that "the fungi strikes back"... and Millennium *did*. In either case, his offspringy projectiles are his downfall - use them to bounce onto his unprotected cap, and fifteen or so strikes later he'll be stew-fodder.

Dr Maybe initially makes his dramatic entrance riding inside a bipedal, tooled up mechanical cow. His novelty mech sports electrically charged horns, a Gatling gun for udders and milk-shooting urns in place of its front hooves. Aim for Maybe's portal window and you can force him into ditching the malfunctioning armoured bovine suit.
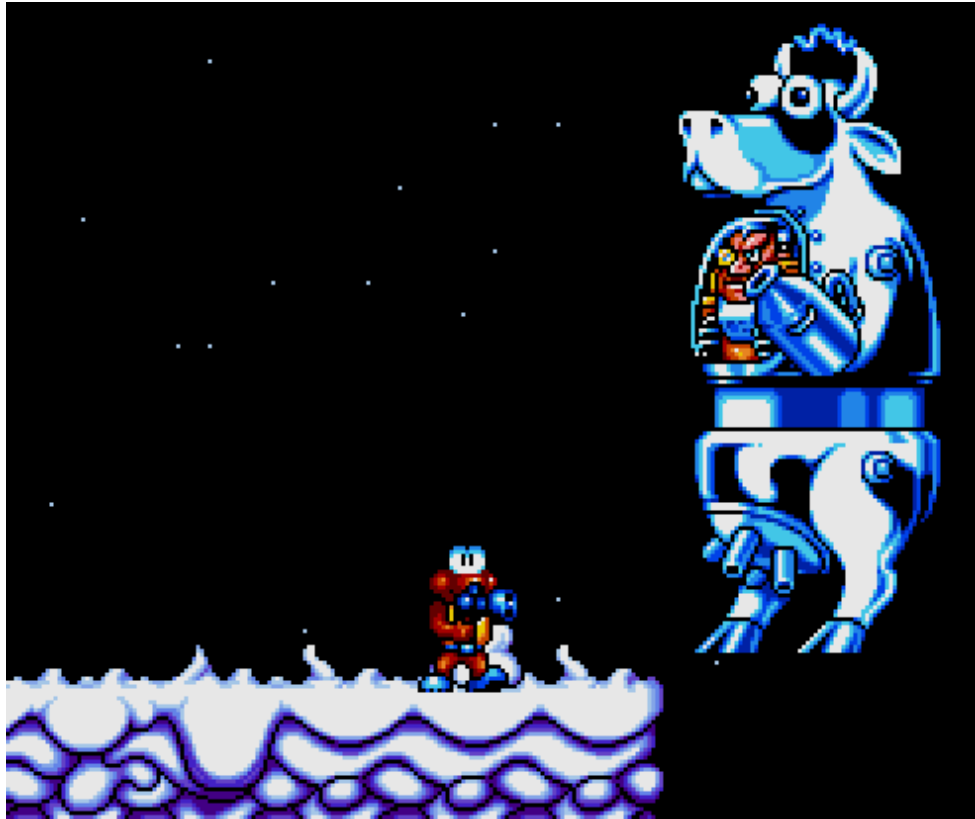
Once ejected you'll have to thrash him all over again as he cavorts about the screen like a turbo-charged Power Ranger unleashing pulse cannon beams from a chest-mounted contraption. Your best bet is landing one-tonne weights on his noggin from above, well out of reach of his horizontally fired lasers.
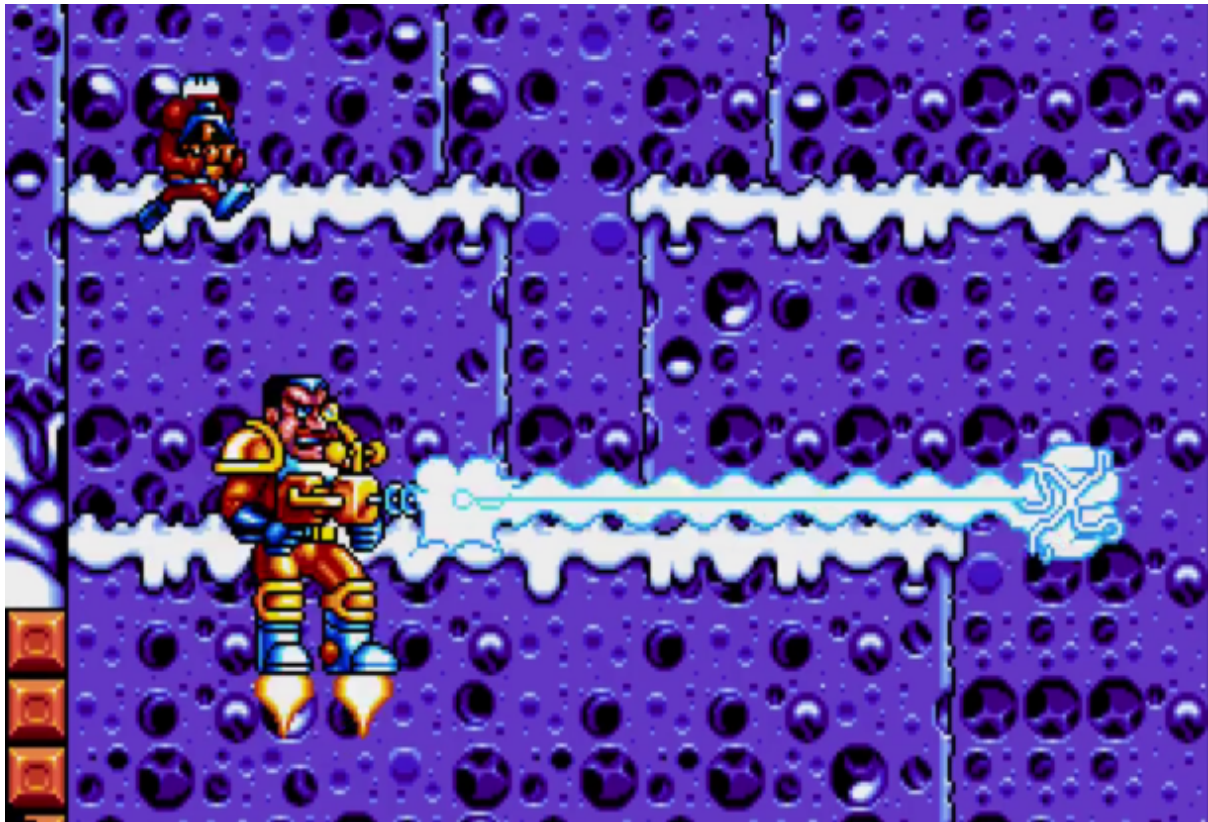
Unlike the majority of the more common, less bossy enemy varieties - most of which are rats - the guardians seem to bear little to no relation to the moon-mining prologue.

I won't Ponder their significance for *too* long. After all we're here to put the kibosh on a nefarious scheme to extract cheese from the moon using a workforce of dim-witted rodents. In any case, these main event skirmishes can be avoided entirely if you're able to find a secret route token, opening up new way-points on the map, delineated by a blue marker. Ideal for speed run challenges. Not so much for appreciating the intricate detail of the scenery.

> "It's a very, very fast scroll. We reckon it's twice as fast as Sonic. I'm not sure yet whether we can achieve it on the normal Amiga but we'll give it a go."

Ian Saunter, The One preview (April 1993)

No matter which route you take, your goal on each level is to destroy the communication beacon to thwart Dr Maybe's plans, or collect certain items such as teacups, as instructed during your mission briefing. You'll only get to see the special ending if you locate a number of critical items such as the satellite fragments. A play mechanic that will be familiar to fans of Japanese platformers, and Taito games in particular.

Not all of these teacups are collectable. I'll give you three guesses.

As well as preventing the world from drowning under the weight of a smorgasbord of cheese, don't forget you're here to rescue the missing FI5H agents including your radiant girlfriend, Angel Fish, and Finius' cousin, an archaeologist called Farley. From the outset you'll be granted three lives - each comprising three hit points - in order to achieve this. Fret not, as stingy as that sounds for a game this substantial, more can be foraged as you progress.

Head-bouncing is back as a weapon, as well as a means of breaking through any blocks obstructing your progress. Doing this will reveal a wormhole to another dimension if you're very lucky. More than likely though you'll find some extra points, or something more useful such as ammo,

lurking within. Eliminating the guesswork, any invisible ones can be revealed by wearing the x-ray specs.

Spring boots will aid you in reaching any obscurely located goody blocks aside from propelling you up to out of the way platforms. Couple that with the helmet pickup and your head will be protected from ceiling spikes and falling objects as you prance around channelling Zebedee from the Magic Roundabout.

James Pond wearing a builder's hard hat or a Fraggle Rock Doozer?

In addition, you can pick up and throw bombs and various other items strewn about the landscape, extremely quickly if they have a fuse attached and it happens to be lit. Those that *don't* explode such as cheese and shoes can be exploited further as platforms to gain higher ground, otherwise beyond Pond's reach. Breaking TVs achieves the same end, albeit in a more innovative way; a poltergeist emerges that can be ridden as it ascends!

Then there's the gateaux gun that fires homing cakes, as well as apples, strawberries, oranges and lemons. If all else fails you can fall back on your fists (?), pummelling enemies into submission in fin to paw combat.

During certain missions, taking control of your FI5Hy colleague, Finnius the Frog, is an option. What triggers the switch is the discovery of a rock adorned with his likeness. Amongst several game mechanic concepts mulled over

during development, originally Finnius was intended to be controlled by a second player, co-op style. Nevertheless, he was later incorporated into the primary single-player game as coding the feat became too onerous.

> "The second character was going to be like the Golem in Druid and just follow you around but we found that it just didn't work in the end."

Ian Saunter, The One preview (April 1993)

Finnius - who you may remember from Aquatic Games - isn't as fast as Pond, though *can* jump higher and squeeze into smaller spaces. Standing at 42 pixels high Space Pond is 10 pixels taller than RoboCod, trivia nerds! Frogger's speciality is swallowing items and regurgitating them as projectiles, as long as he has first collected the teeth power-up.

Whilst trophies, coins, crowns and energy stars are yours for the taking, far more often you'll be amassing crescent moons for bonus points and extra lives, awarded upon gathering 1000. These substitute for the rings found in the Sonic games, and they're everywhere! Not the most fun aspect of any platformer, although they are at least consistent so you know what to look out for as you hurtle from A to B.

That goes for the levels too - their themes all revolve around the main premise of the game so tend to assimilate dairy-based landscapes in one form or another. This uniformity was sold as a plus point during the PR cavalcade... personally I was never really on board. Since RoboCod's merry-go-round of miscellany really appealed to my eye candy detectors as a kid, I found Operation Starfish's predictability a bit disappointing.

A number of key differences exist between the various ports and original Mega Drive lead. On the Amiga we have a proper save function, while Millennium opted for an object/colour matching password system for the console releases. The latter is so laborious I'd imagine most people would be tempted to switch off their machines and start again from scratch next time; it's *that* ridiculous a chore!

WE HAVE PINPOINTED YOUR POSITION WITH OUR SPY SATELLITE I'M SENDING THE DATA NOW. IT'S IN THE USUAL F.I.S.H. CODE SO BE SURE TO NOTE DOWN ALL THE ITEMS AND THEIR COLOURS.

"One of the trickier aspects of James Pond 3 was the fact that the game was huge, but we had no game-save hardware for our lead Mega Drive platform. We concocted a crazy 'icon sequence' system that required people to write down a chain of random objects as pass codes. It certainly wasn't ideal, but the code entry screen did feature a really cute mouse that would run on to hug the cheese-wedge-shaped cursor if you waited long enough!"

Chris Sorrell, Retro Gamer issue 44 (November 2007)

The animated, digitised opening sequence familiar to RoboCod's CD32 owning fans is absent from the Mega Drive incarnation. As is the secret Penguin Hideout stage that appears in the Amiga port, accessed via a warp found within the 'East of Edam' level. This isn't simply a whimsical Easter egg, a nod towards RoboCod's biscuity licensing origins. Despite Penguin bars being conspicuously absent from JP3

outside of this hidden level they *did* actually sponsor the game, at least the Amiga versions anyway.

Amiga gamers are treated to much more memorable music, taking advantage of the superior audio hardware on offer. That said, *all* versions benefit greatly from the involvement of legendary composer, Richard Joseph, accompanied by Graham King where the SNES port is concerned.

A zany remix of the original James Pond theme tune constitutes part of the Amiga port's soundtrack. Running to over seven and a half minutes you could quite happily head-bop to this long enough to finish most missions; blend an approximation of the Blues Brothers' 'Peter Gunn' theme with various James Bond ditties filtered through a warbly underwater mic, and you'll get the gist. Other tracks are clearly nostalgic throwbacks to RoboCod, while new material evoking gallant astronautical adventures comprises the remainder of the air time.

...and that's not the only occasion on which you'll find yourself reminiscing over cods past. Here's the evolution of 'Bully Boy' from the beach. Elsewhere you can spot RoboCod's poison bottle power-down and the 'Jolly Jumper' nuisance.

In contrast, for Mega Drive owners, this musical drawback is mitigated by the gloriously vivid, parallax-scrolled backdrops. For the Amiga outing, these were substituted with uninspiring stars set against the gloom of an otherwise desolate, tenebrous sky.
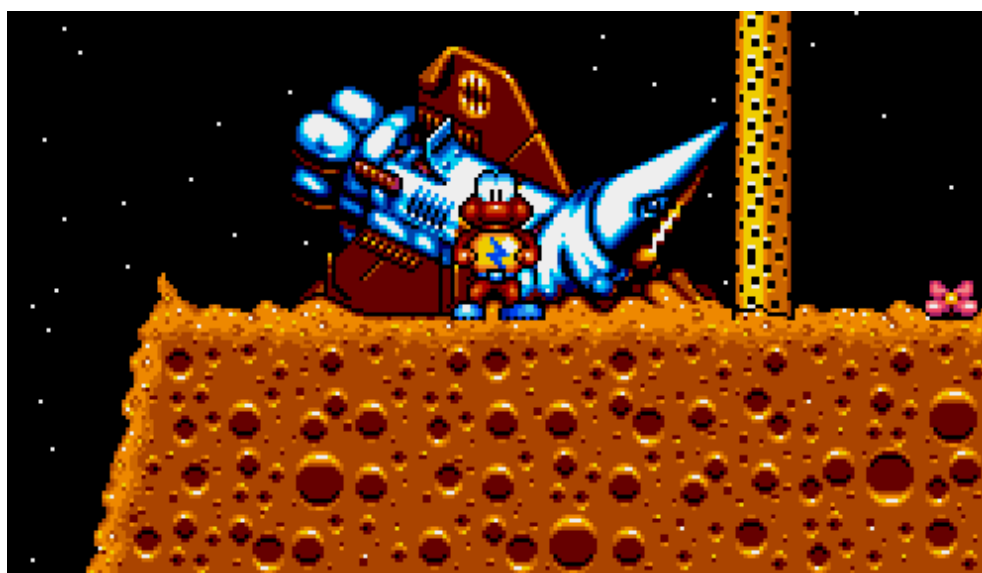
Almost like an elasmobranch fish out of water. ;)

This wasn't a decision taken to augment the intense Sonic-esque speed boost craved by computer gamers. Regrettably, the truth is that the Amiga version was a hurried afterthought, as Chris Sorrell himself admits in an interview with EAB's Codetapper. Chris, unfamiliar with the Amiga's AGA chipset, entrusted our port to his colleague, Alan McCarthy, who was already frazzled emerging from a particularly trying console development cycle. He didn't do a terrible job by any means - far from it - although the Amiga version *does* cut some corners and is often quite laggy as the action becomes more intense.

At a glance Operation Starfish seems to tick all the right boxes, so why is it the third entry in the revered James Pond series is largely forsaken today, despite its mostly favourable critical response upon release? Of course Chris himself has a theory, so to extract it I consulted Retro Gamer who had already raised the subject with him...

> "Looking back I think it ended up being a pretty solid game with a lot of depth and charm. It was the only game of the three that really felt to me like a real console product, rather than a computer game striving to be like a console game. Unfortunately, perhaps in pursuing the big boys and looking more to Mario and Sonic for inspiration than the less obvious homages of its predecessors, we lost some of the identity and innocence."

Chris Sorrell, Retro Gamer issue 44 (November 2007)

As some of the most tough to please critics in the Amiga community proffered alternative suggestions, others looked on in befuddlement as if to say, "What on earth are you

blithering on about, Operation Starfish is the best thing since sliced kippers."

"It's perhaps inevitable that any game you have to wait this long for is going to be a bit of a disappointment when it finally arrives, but James Pond 3 is as much of a letdown as anything I've seen for quite some time."

46% - Amiga Power (June 1994)

"As you progress through the levels, the game map extends and you can travel to all manner of bizarre worlds. Worlds with ice, cherries, custard and cows. And yet, upon arriving in these new worlds, at times you get the feeling you've been there before; Pond might be huge in terms of gaming area but much of the gameplay is rather 'samey'. And darned tricky at times too - not that this is a bad thing, of course.

It's not as if there isn't enough to do. Pick-ups abound - dynamite, jetpacks, cheese and gateaux guns - and there are enough baddies to satisfy even the most fanatical of exterminators. And sure, Pond's as pacey as a certain spiky hedgehog, yet Operation Starfi5h lacks character. Yes, one of the Amiga's most endearing platform heroes is in an adventure that you just cannot be bothered trying to win. That's sad."

75% - Amiga Format (July 1994)

"The ultimate follow up? I think so. Millennium have the Pond series down to a fine art now, and I should think so too considering the number of platforms that RoboCod got put out on. If you've seen the incredible Megadrive version of this game, then you'll be happy to know that this is identical.

An amazing game - it's just a crying shame that non-AGA owners will have to miss out."

"One of the best arcade games ever released for the Amiga."

94% - CU Amiga (June 1994)

MILLENNIUM PRESENTS -

JAMES POND 3
OPERATION STARFISH

IN ASSOCIATION WITH PENGUIN BISCUITS

A VECTORDEAN GAME.

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"If I told you that Operation Starfi5h was quite unlike any other Amiga platform game, I wouldn't be lying. It's huge. No really, it's very huge... and bloody fast. It also takes quite a different tack to most other platform games where, as a rule, enemies are thrown in to make getting to the end of the level quite a job for the player. In this game, just getting to the end of each level is enough of a challenge without a large number of wrongdoers attacking you at every opportunity. You could play the first level a dozen times, and still find a different way to get to the end of it each time.

Have I told you how great it looks? OK, so it isn't anywhere near as colourful as RoboCod (put them side by side, and this one looks a little bland in places), but where the colour has been removed, bags of character has been added. Pond is no longer the cute little fish who wiggles from side to side when he walks - this is a leaner, meaner fish, with a gleam in his eye and a set jaw.

The one big difference between James Pond 3 and RoboCod is that this one is very, very hard. It'll take quite a few goes before you can get past the first couple of levels without losing stacks of energy (remember how easy RoboCod was?). Mind you, it's never frustratingly hard - for every hit you take, you can see how it happened, and learn to avoid it next time.

There's a good learning curve to the game, but this is no evening class. This is a three-year degree course. With homework. Pond 3 is every bit as good as I hoped it would be and well worth rushing out for with your cash held high. I promise you won't be disappointed. I also promise that you won't even vaguely see the entire game for a long, long time."

90% - The One (June 1994)
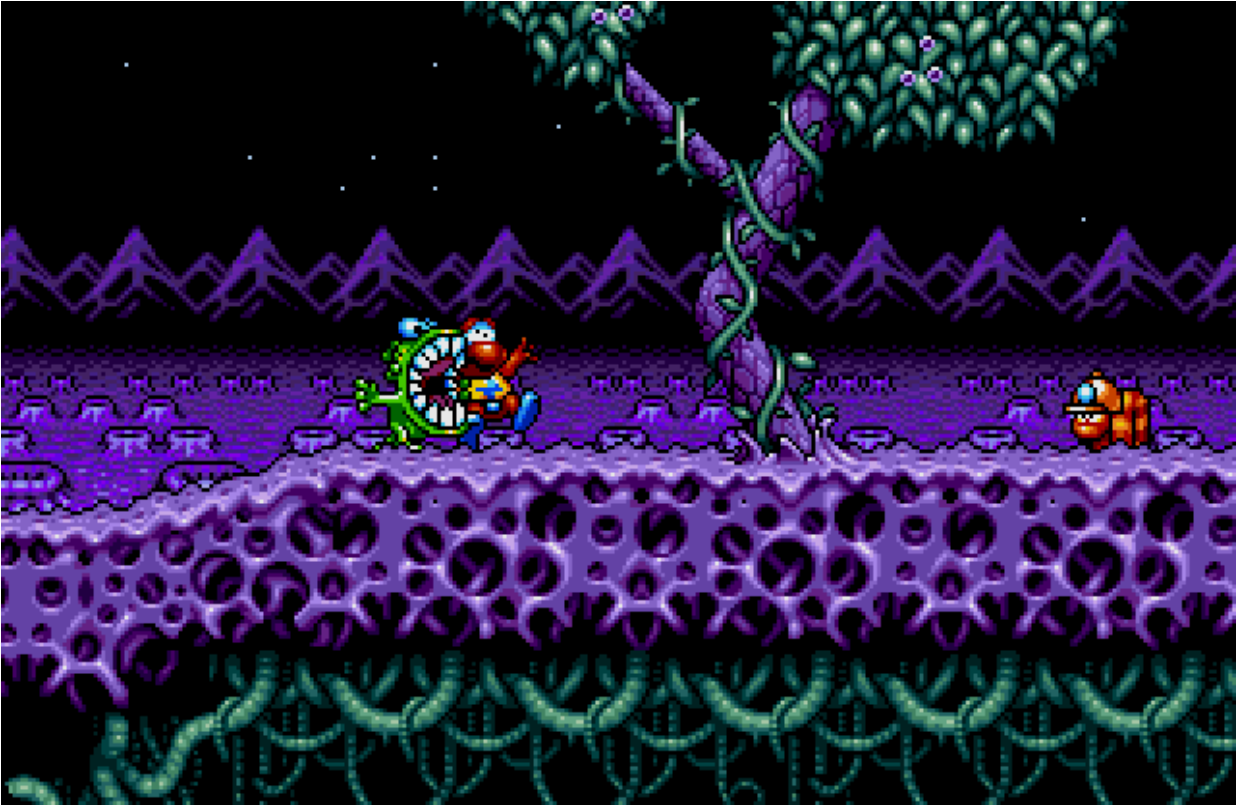
"Highly original it might not be, but fans of the previous games and platform lovers will be absolutely besotted with the third instalment of James Pond.

The game contains over 111 massive levels. It's one of the harder platformers I've had the pleasure of playing and I guarantee that it will take even the most experienced gamer a long time to complete.

The major difference between RoboCod and its successor is that Pond 3 contains a high puzzle element to it and it's not a case of simply getting to the other side of the screen to the exit any more.

The game also has a brand new character in Finneus Frog, one of Pond's fellow secret agents. This adds a whole new dimension to the Pond series and you literally get two games for the price of one.

Graphics-wise, I can't fault James Pond 3 as it looks exquisite. Although the graphics are brilliant, the game really shines in the playability and addiction stakes. I, for one, haven't been able to put it down since it came into the office.

Don't forget that James Pond 3 is for the A1200 and CD32 only, and that's simply because the game is far too big to fit onto the A500/A600.

For sheer enjoyment and lastability you'd have to go far to find a better platform game than Millennium's tasty third fishy adventure. If you're yearning for some fast, frenetic platform jumping fun then I suggest you splash your cash on James Pond 3. You will not regret it!"

85% - Amiga Computing (July 1994)

Beginning in the early '90s jillions of computer gamers spent the duration of the system's lifespan chasing the elusive pipe-dream of an Amiga equivalent to Sonic. Well, here it is, delivered just before the user base's mass exodus to competing PC and console platforms. Zool doesn't come close to matching JP3's insane momentum and knock-about pinball vibe, and *still* he's the nearly-mascot many of us associate with Sonic-cloning success stories.

> "Zool is shallow in characterisation. The notion of a lone Ninja is interesting but there is nothing more to him than that. Now that we've improved massively on RoboCod with James Pond 3, Zool will look dated."
>
> **'the guys at Millennium', Amiga Action preview (May 1993)**

Personally I was happy to leave Sonic to the fidgety, speed-hungry Japanese gamers while I enjoyed more laid-back platformers such as RoboCod and Addams Family. Titles which run at a pace that makes it possible to appreciate all the attention to detail the developers poured into creating an enchanting world you yearn to explore. Did anyone really notice that - courtesy of Chris, and graphicians, Sean Nicholls and Leavon Archer - Space Pond's very existence is comprised of 120 frames of animation, or that there are over 50 different types of beautifully drawn, imaginative baddies with which to tangle? I didn't think so.

Creating a game designed to be blitzed rather than scrutinised is a completely different proposition to what

Amiga gamers knew and loved. I think of JP3's various segments as circuits rather than levels, and the game in general as a racer in a platformer costume. As such it appeals to fans of neither genre. Not even the ones who always coveted what the smug console kiddies had, and refused to share, who switched to pining for something else once their prayers were finally answered.